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INFORMATION REPORT

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COUNTRY Bolivia

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SUBJECT Secret MNR Meetings

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SUPPLEMENT TO
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1. Because of Bolivian police vigilance, the Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario (MNR) has held a number of clandestine meetings and caucuses in addition to the legally held MNR convention in La Paz, during the early part of February 1951, at which time Victor Paz Estenssoro, now in exile in Buenos Aires, was named presidential candidate.
2. Some twenty MNR leaders held a secret pre-convention meeting on 8 February in a private home at 152 Calle Pedro Kramer, La Paz, presided over by Federico Alvarez Plata, president of the legal convention. At this meeting, the credentials of the MNR delegates to the legal convention were minutely scrutinized, and plans were made to send a secret delegation to the Argentine border town of Villazon about 15 March 1951. The delegation will be instructed to meet with various exiles in Argentina and receive an unspecified amount of money now being collected in Argentina by Elia Campero, who source reported has also been promised funds by Eva Peron for MNR election use.* This delegation, consisting of three individuals, will travel to the border as businessmen.
3. After the close of the official convention on Saturday, 10 February 1951, approximately 300 delegates and MNR adherents gathered at about 5 p.m. for a celebration at a restaurant called Cala Cala, Avenida Buenos Aires, La Paz. In about an hour, three truckloads of armed Bolivian police arrived and discharged their rifles in the air. The assembled group dispersed and the MNR leaders went to the home of Federico Alvarez Plata, 341 Calle Potosi, La Paz, where another secret closed-door session was held, lasting until 2 a.m. 11 February.
4. During the meeting at Alvarez' home, plans were made to send a commission to the various departments of Bolivia to collect funds for election use, as well as to organize committees to decide on the election platforms which would appeal most to the miners and other labor groups upon which the MNR will rely for support. It was agreed that candidates for national senator would be named in only those districts where the MNR has a good chance of winning; i.e., in Potosi, Santa Cruz, and Cochabamba. Adrian Barrenechea, former mayor of the City of Potosi, was named MNR candidate for senator for the Department of Potosi despite the fact that he is now being held by the police. Other candidates were not named during the meeting.

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On 15 February 1951, at 8:30 p.m., another secret meeting was held at Alvarez' home, attended by Jose Lucio Quiroz, Jorge Rios Gamarra, Jose Pellran Velarde, Fernando Alvarez La Serna, Matilde Olmos, Pellegrina de Eguino, and two others whose names were not known to source. Plans and methods to recruit new members were discussed; plans were outlined to collect funds for the printing of sample ballots; a draft of a manifesto, giving MNR aims for Bolivian public consumption, was drawn up; the organization of a women's group to aid in party work, headed by Matilde Olmos, Calle Colon 589, La Paz, was discussed; and further details concerning the delegation to the Argentine border were discussed. The meeting ended at 11:45 p.m.

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MNR leaders are assuming that they will be subjected to harassment by the police, because they believe that the Bolivian Government has decided for political reasons, with the end of the state of siege imposed 15 November 1950, that the MNR party is bent on some sort of revolutionary attempt. MNR leaders are convinced that they can return to power in Bolivia if honest elections are held, and that they do not need revolutionary methods to attain their ends. If honest elections are not held, certain of the more militant members of the MNR have stated that they may have to take matters into their own hands to restore good government to Bolivia.**

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Comment: Ela Camero has been previously reported to be active in MNR propaganda work in La Paz. In August 1949, when the Bolivian Government was persecuting the MNR for plotting against the government, she was reported to have obtained asylum in the Argentine Embassy in La Paz.

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Comment: The unlikelihood of revolutionary attempts by MNR factions is taken at its face value, but reports by other sources that the MNR hopes to regain power through honest elections tend to bear out the above report.

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